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THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY

Entered as second-class matter November 18, 1907, at the Post Office, New York, N. Y., under the Act of Congress of March 1, 1879

VOL. VI

NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 16, 1912

No. 6

The Harvard Alumni Bulletin for May contains a short article entitled *The Average Undergraduate*, which is also made the subject of editorial comment in the same number. The writer of the article, Mr. Philip J. Roosevelt, 1913, maintains that the average undergraduate is distinguished by "complete, black ignorance" and that most of the college instructors do little to remedy this evil. Few college students have any ideas or culture. They read without thought or for the purpose of examination only to forget immediately afterward. Reading followed by thoughtful discussion is very unusual. That, however, the undergraduate can be made to read and think is evident from the fact that in some courses (Comparative Literature 12 is cited) reading and thought are demanded and obtained. The writer urges more attention to subjects of contemporary interest which will appeal more to the average undergraduate and less attention to subjects of less immediate interest.

The editorial deals primarily with the classical literature of Greece and Rome "both because it was the cornerstone of the older idea of a university and because we have lately had proof in our own family of its perennial life" (the reference is to the recently published *Harvard Essays on Classical Subjects*). The question asked by the editorial is, "does the study of the classics as it is carried on to-day inculcate accuracy in the acquisition of facts, and do the facts acquired in that study breed ideas?" To the first of these questions a decided affirmative reply is given; the discussion of the second opens up the whole field of college instruction in general. In brief, the editorial urges that facts must be vital to find a position in the college curriculum. A very large number of facts have no interest for the average man and in classical instruction those elements only should be stressed and discussed which have made Classics so influential during all the centuries. So many classical instructors seem obsessed by the idea that the commentary is the important element in study whereas rightly considered it is the text and the message therein contained. Syntax, textual criticism, archaeology are important and essential to the specialist, but comparatively meager attention to these can readily be justified if the student thereby gets a nearer approach to the great message of Plato

or Aeschylus or Lucretius or Tacitus. As the editor says, the distinction between these two classes of facts goes to the root of a liberal education. Another sentence of faith and hope is worth the greatest emphasis. It is this: "We believe, therefore, that we have men who can invent ways of teaching the classics to undergraduates without burying the facts that breed ideas under the facts that are of value only to the specialist in classical learning". The existence of these men no one can dispute, but how rare they are and, what is worse, how true it is that these men develop in spite of their college training rather than because of it. In this connection some statistics of enrollment in Greek and Latin at Harvard are cited as follows:

Last year the two courses in Greek literature for freshmen had between them 43 students; and the corresponding courses in Latin had 104. The second year courses in Greek literature had between them 28 and the second year courses in Latin 28. Here is a more than normal falling off, especially in Latin.

This falling off is interpreted to mean that by the beginning of the second year the study of the Classics is practically limited to men who are going to teach; if this is true, as the editor contends, a great fountain of ideas is sealed to most of the College.

At any rate the Division of Classics faces a serious situation. The problem before them is to discover how they can so give their instruction that without abating in accuracy they can give an average undergraduate a permanent and vital grasp of such noble ideas as are discussed in the *Harvard Essays on Classical Subjects*. The problem is by no means simple, but its solution will carry far-reaching service to the higher education.

Is not this the problem that confronts classical teaching all over our land? If the Classics are to live must it not be by their perennial qualities? qualities not facts? Further, must not college students learn to think carefully on matters of real weight while they are in College if their college course is to bring them any results? If the difficulty at Harvard is ignorance, what must it be in those institutions where much less attention is paid to the study of man? Is it not true all through our educational system that we are paying attention to the letter and neglecting the spirit in defiance of the Biblical axiom? G. L.